

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 01682 141449Z

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
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P R 141415Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2182

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 1682

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, US, IS

SUBJECT: KHADDAM SEES U.S. POSITION AS BIASED TOWARDS ISRAEL

### 1. SUMMARY:

KHADDAM IS VERY UNEASY OVER PRESIDENT CARTER'S MARCH 9 PRESS CONFERENCE WHICH HE VIEWS AS EVIDENCE THAT NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION IS BIASED TOWARDS ISRAELI POSITION. HE CONSIDERS USG IGNORES PROBLEMS THAT ARAB LEADERS HAVE WITH THEIR PUBLIC OPINION AND TENDS ASSUME THAT THEY ARE FREE AGENTS. CLAIMED SADAT'S AND HUSSEIN'S POSITIONS WERE SERIOUSLY WEAKENED BY ALLEGATIONS OF CIA FINANCING AND FURTHER BY LATEST USG STATEMENTS.

END SUMMARY

2. IN COURSE OF MEETING WITH FONMIN KHADDAM MARCH 13, I SHARED WITH HIM THE ACCOUNT OF THE SECRETARY'S MARCH 12 MEETING WITH ARAB AMBASSADORS (STATE 056029) AND FURNISHED STATEMENT SUBSEQUENTLY MADE BY LEBANESE AMBASSADOR KABBANI TO REPORTERS.

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SECRET

PAGE 02 DAMASC 01682 141449Z

3. KHADDAM SAID HE APPRECIATED THIS ADVANCE READING OF THE SECRETARY'S MEETING SINCE REPORT BY SYRIAN AMBASSADOR NOT YET RECEIVED. HE CONTINUED, IN MOOD I CAN ONLY DESCRIBE AS BOTH SOMBER AND IMPASSIONED, OBSERVING THAT "THE AMERICAN POSITION APPEARS TO BE ADOPTING THE ISRAELI POINT OF VIEW IN TOTO. THIS DOES NOT HELP YOUR PROFESSED GOAL OF WANTING TO PLAY

THE ROLE OF MEDIATOR. THE THIS, AT A MINIMUM, A NEUTRAL ATTITUDE BETWEEN THE CONFLICTING DEMANDS OF THE PARTIES IS REQUIRED."

4. KHADDAM WAS PARTICULARLY DISTURBED BY PRESIDENT CARTER'S MARCH 9 PRESS CONFERENCE WHICH HE SAID HE HAD CLOSELY STUDIED IN ARABIC TRANSLATION. (HE SINGLED OUT NO SPECIAL PART OF PRESS CONF.) THE THRUST OF HIS PRESENTATION WAS THAT IF WASHINGTON BRINGS A BIASED ATTITUDE TO THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFRONTATION, THIS WILL NOT HELP WIN LASTING RESULTS. HE COMPLAINED THAT US OFFICIALS CONTINUE TO IGNORE PROBLEMS THAT ARAB LEADERS HAVE WITH THEIR PUBLIC OPINION. WHILE USG IS READY TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE FORCE OF BOTH ISRAELI AND AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION ON THEIR RESPECTIVE LEADERSHIPS, WASHINGTON MUST NOT ASSUME THAT THE ARAB LEADERS ARE FREE AGENTS. "LOOK AT SADAT'S POSITION. IF IT WERE NOT FOR HIS ARMY'S SUPPORT, HE WOULD BE FINISHED. THE JANUARY RIOTS SHOWED HOW MUCH HE HAD LOST THE SUPPORT OF THE EGYPTIAN PUBLIC AND PRESIDENT CARTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE HAS FURTHER HURT HIM." HE THEN REFERRED TO PUBLISHED REPORTS OF CIA FINANCING OF HUSSEIN AND MONEY PASSED BY KAMAL ADHAM TO SADAT, WHEN LATTER WAS VICE PRESIDENT, AS EXAMPLES OF THE "ZIONIST HAND" AT WORK. ANY OTHER EXPLANATION, HE ASSERTED, FAILED TO EXPLAIN WHY SUCH REVELATIONS WOULD HAVE BEEN MADE DURING THE SECRETARY'S RECENT VISIT TO THE AREA.

5. I PROTESTED THAT THE PRESIDENT IS NOT TAKING SIDES IN ME DISPUTE AND ASSURED HIM WE AWARE OF RESPONSIBILITIES ALL LEADERS IN AREA HAD TOWARDS THEIR PUBLIC  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 DAMASC 01682 141449Z

OPINION. IF KHADDAM NOT CONVINCED BY THE PRESIDENT'S OWN WORDS AND OTHER OFFICIAL U.S. COMMENTS I SUGGESTED THAT FONMIN ALSO STUDY CAREFULLY THE ISRAELI PRESS REACTIONS OVER THE PAST WEEK. NOTED THAT AT FIRST A NOTE OF EXHILARATION DOMINATED ISRAELI MEDIA AS VARIOUS COMMENTATORS CLAIMED TO SEE A SHIFT IN US POSITION FAVORABLE TO ISRAEL IN THE PRESIDENT'S USE OF THE TERM "DEFENSIBLE BORDERS." BUT HIS MARCH 9 PRESS CONFERENCE, TOGETHER WITH OTHER STATEMENTS BY THE WHITE HOUSE SPOKESMAN AND THE SECRETARY, LED TO A SWIFT CHANGE IN TONE AND THE MAJORITY OF ISRAELI COMMENTATORS WERE NOW EXPRESSING DEEP DISAPPOINTMENT IN US ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION. KHADDAM REJECTED THIS INTERPRETATION OF ISRAELI REACTION. "WHASHINGTON MUST REALIZE THAT ONCE AGAIN THE ISRAEL LEADERSHIP IS ORCHESTRATING A MANEUVER TO DECEIVE THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION. BY SAYING HOW DISAPPOINTED THEY ARE BY THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE, THEY ARE SIMPLY COVERING UP THEIR TRUE PLEASURE OVER YOUR POSITION."

6. COMMENT: DURING ALL OF THE FOREGOING, KHADDAM HAD ASKED HIS NOTETAKER NOT TO RECORD HIS REMARKS BUT SAID HE WOULD BE MAKING SIMILAR POINTS WHEN HE COMES TO WASHINGTON. THIS MEANS HE WAS SPEAKING WITHOUT ASAD'S DIRECT INSTRUCTION AT THAT MOMENT BUT IS CONFIDENT THAT HE REFLECTS ASAD'S OWN THINKING.

MURPHY

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## Message Attributes

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